

J. R. G. HASSARD DEAD.

A BRILLIANT SCHOLAR AND ORIST.

His long, uncomplaining struggle with consumption—LABORS FOR THE TRIBUNE.

John Rose Greene Hassard, who for more than twenty years was a leading member of *THE TRIBUNE* editorial staff, died yesterday morning at half-past 7 o'clock, at his home, No. 218 East Eighteenth-st., from pulmonary consumption. He was conscious almost to the last, and passed away quietly in the presence of his wife and mother, Mrs. Augusta Greene Hassard. Monsignor Preston remained in the house all night. He was born on September 4, 1836, in Houston-st., almost opposite the old convent of Mercy, and was married by Monsignor Preston in St. Ann's Church, on May 8, 1872.

Though he had suffered for nine years from consumption, it was not until Saturday that his condition changed so much for the worse that his death was expected at any hour. After that time he ate almost nothing. Monsignor Preston, who has been his intimate friend for years, and his spiritual adviser as well, visited him every day after Saturday and was by his bedside up to within a short time before his death. He was sitting up until Tuesday morning, when the weak spells which foreboded death became so threatening that he was obliged to take to his bed for the first time during his sickness, and there he remained until he died. For several days he lived on liquid food exclusively and such other condiments of a medicinal nature as the doctor prescribed. A little ice-cream was about the last thing that he ate.

His illness was due in a measure to the labor which he devoted to translating the Tilden cipher dispatches in 1878. It began with a slight cough, which he paid no attention to. He spent the summer of 1879 in Europe, during which time he wrote a series of interesting letters for *THE TRIBUNE* from London on places made famous by Dickens, Thackeray and other well-known writers, which were afterward published in book form.

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He became associated with *THE TRIBUNE* in 1866, and in various capacities he served this journal for about twenty years. He was an editorial writer, a book reviewer, and a musical critic, and for some time after the death of Mr. Greeley in 1872 he held the post of managing editor. He wrote the "Life of Archbishop Hughes" (1866); the "Life of Pope Pius IX" (1877); a "History of the United States" (1877); "The King of the Nibelungs—A Description of the First Performance, in August, 1876, at Bayreuth" (1877); and "A Pictorial Pilgrimage" (1881). The two books last named were made up of chapters that he originally published in *THE TRIBUNE*. He was the representative of Wagner's remarkable exploits and success at that time—certainly a remarkable epoch in the history of music—is one of fascinating interest, and it is just as fresh and vital to-day as when it was written. Indeed, the sagacity with which he recognized Wagner's colossal power and the precision and authority with which he forecasted the drift and triumph of that great composer's ideas and influence abide still, among many proofs of his pre-eminent competence and superiority as a musical critic. His "Pictorial Pilgrimage" was the result of a stroll in England, in the summer of 1879, chiefly in the track of Mr. Pickett and his friends. Mr. Hassard was an ardent admirer of the works of Charles Dickens, and he followed in the footsteps of that novelist very reverently and with affectionate appreciation. This book contains an account of a boat voyage down the River Wye, from Hereford to Chepstow, which is perhaps the best single example of his best literary manner that could be chosen—a manner in which the influence of Goldsmith and Addison is clearly discernible through the writer's own characteristic mood of keen observation, direct statement, light, pictorial touch, and gentle sentiment. Another of his especially felicitous works is a little pamphlet called "The Fast Printing Machine" (1878), being a simple narrative of mechanical dexterity and industrial achievement, but made as earnest as one of the best of Macaulay's Essays, invested with the romance, charm and interest of a fairy tale, and expressed in language of rare felicity and vigor. Mr. Hassard was an occasional contributor to "The Catholic Review," and at one time he was the New-York correspondent of "The London Daily News," but that year resigned when his health began to fail, a few years ago. He was married, in 1872, to Miss Isabella Hargrove. His widow survives him. He leaves no children. These few sentences recount the chief incidents of his life—scarcely more eventful to stranger eyes than that of the Vicar of Wakefield, with his migration from the brown bed to the blue and from the blue bed back again to the brown. It is the old story of the brain worker, the man of thought, who stands apart from the pagan of human affairs, moralizing on it as it passes, and striving to purify and refresh it at the springs of its incessant and tumultuous flow.

The actual and essential story of his life, of course, lies far deeper and would be found beneath the surface, in the current of his intellectual development and the analysis of his literary achievements. He was not one of the exceptionally few who build monuments essentially great in literature, and thus strongly command and permanently retain the attention and interest of the world. He was simply a man of the talents and lovely character, who devoted himself to the service of his fellow-creatures, in the avocation of journalism, and who made his mark in that field—broad and strong and brilliant and noble. The great public of miscellaneous readers cannot, perhaps, rationally be supposed to cherish any very deep interest in such a personality for any great length of time after his career has ended. But it was a personality that blessed many who never heard of it, while those whose privilege it was to know Mr. Hassard well and to know his labors and their value will eagerly and tenderly meditate now upon the rare qualities and beautiful traits of his mind, and will be very slow to forget the charm of his companionship and the lesson of his pure, blameless, devoted and beneficent life. He would have been the first to reprove extravagant eulogy of his talents or his productions. Yet it should be said that he filled a difficult and delicate office with ability and discretion, and that he taught the critics and journalists of his time things that it was well worth their while to learn. Among other things he taught, by his example, the prime necessity of being perfectly well acquainted with the art discussed. He studied conscientiously and with laborious zeal. His freedom from conventionality and from prejudice—constantly evident in his writings—was a continued monument of refreshing originality of view and justice of mood. He looked at every subject with his own eyes, and not with the eyes of the past. The word that he spoke was the word of to-day, and not of yesterday, and he never fell into the error of mistaking his own personal distaste or aversion for a defect in the artist or the work that he reviewed. He knew, with Coleridge, that the first requisite for a good critic is a good heart, and he proved that he knew it every time he took up his pen. His keen intuition as to the relative importance of persons and themes was constantly manifested, and was still another lesson of practical value. For this journalist and man of letters, this devotee of art and music, who often sat alone for hours playing upon the organ the music that he loved or that he was to discuss, was also a man of the world. He possessed the sense of proportion and fitness, an old-time courtliness of thinking as well as of manner, a sense of the right place for trifles, and a very happy faculty for silence. He was not envious and he was not meddlesome. He never thought it to be his duty, when acting as musical critic of *THE TRIBUNE*, to regulate the musical criticism of the other newspapers of this country. If he wanted a good criticism of an opera to be printed he deigned to write it himself, instead of writing querulous observations condemnatory of the critic to the editors of his contemporaries. It was another of his admirable and exemplary qualities that he perceived the critical duty of giving encouragement. He looked into the future of the artist, and he could be wisely lenient. In the fulfillment of his duty he thought of himself last, or not at all, while his dignity was of that natural kind which is always present. From the study of his intellectual development and the analysis of his writings much assuredly might be learned. This much, meantime, is learned and may be stated—that education and experience, operating upon fine instincts, had taught him how to use rare faculties for the best advantage of one.

One of the interesting episodes in Mr. Hassard's career as a journalist was the unraveling of the Tilden cipher dispatches, and the complete exposure of the most remarkable political conspiracy ever formed in this country. In this important work he took a leading part, though an important member of *THE TRIBUNE* staff did a large share of it, and kept abreast of him in successive discoveries. After weeks of blind groping and almost hopeless labor at first, Mr. Hassard had found two transposition keys, and had almost finished a third, while his associate had found three others. This was the progress made when they first compared notes, and after that the rate of discovery was rapid, ending in a full revelation of every ramification of this most elaborate conspiracy. The publication of the results, in *THE TRIBUNE*, startled the country, as all will remember, and led to an investigation by Congress. Considered merely as an intellectual feat, it was an astonishing exhibition of logical power, ingenuity and comprehensive knowledge, for a familiarity with the most trivial detail of the political history of the time was necessary to success in the work. It was an achievement without a parallel, probably, in journalism. This task engrossed Mr. Hassard for months, and his execution of it was a striking example of his versatility, a quality for which he was remarkable, even among journalists, with whom versatility is a part of the trade. No crafty medieval politician could have shown greater keenness in hunting down clever than seemed to lead to the heart of the conspiracy, never tiring until the right one had been found. Yet he was as ready and as sure with a criticism upon a book or a symphony, as

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